

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2022

Remarks at the United States-Africa Leaders Summit Session on the African Union's Agenda 2063

December 15, 2022

Well, good still morning, everyone. I realized last night, when our dinner ended and the entertainment ended, it was 5 o'clock in the morning for most of you. *[Laughter]* So I admire your collective stamina. Thank you very much. And I promise my comments will not take you to tomorrow morning.

My friends, I'm honored to host you all here in Washington for the U.S.-African Leaders Summit. It's so wonderful to spend time with you and your spouses last night at dinner. And I truly enjoyed it, and thank you for making the time.

And let me also convey my condolences to the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for the tragic loss of life and the communities impacted due to the flooding. Mr. President, we missed you last night, but if there's anything the United States can do to help in this effort, please, please let us know. We'll do whatever we can.

Today I'm looking forward to hearing more from all of you about the issues and priorities that matter most to Africa and how we can deepen our cooperation. And I emphasize "cooperation." Our nations have worked closely together for a long time. We've improved the lives of countless people in all our countries in meaningful ways, on both sides of the Atlantic.

And with this summit, and with the African Union's Agenda 2063, our eyes are fixed squarely on the future. We're now in the early years that will be a decisive decade. The choices that we make today and the remainder of this decade and how we tackle these challenges, in my view, will determine the direction the entire world takes in the decades to come.

As I said yesterday, the United States is all in on Africa and all in with Africa. African voices, African leadership, African innovation all are critical to addressing the most pressing global challenges and to realizing the vision we all share: a world that is free, a world that is open, prosperous, and secure.

Africa belongs to the table in every room—in every room—where global challenges are being discussed and in every institution where discussions are taking place. That's why I announced in September, at the United Nations General Assembly, that the United States fully supports reforming the U.N. Security Council to include permanent representation for Africa.

And today I'm also calling for the African Union to join the G-20 as a permanent member of the G-20. Whether it's—*[applause]*—it's been a long time in coming, but it's going to come.

And today I'm also—whether we're upholding or defending the foundational principles of global peace and security enshrined in the U.N. Charter and the U.N.—and in the AU's seminal documents or meeting the challenges that impact every nation, the people of Africa are indispensable partners, delivering—to delivering the progress that benefits everyone, not just in Africa and the United States, but the whole world.

The COVID-19 pandemic, followed by Russia's unjust and unprovoked war against its neighbor Ukraine, has roiled the global economy, erasing many of the development gains that we worked so hard together to achieve over the past two decades. But that doesn't change our shared goals and our commitment to seeing them through. It only makes it more urgent for us to take decisive action and take it together.

That's why, over the next 3 years, working in close cooperation with the United States Congress, we plan to commit \$55 billion in Africa to advance the priorities we share and to support the Agenda 2063. That number represents a comprehensive commitment from the United States to invest in Africa's people, Africa's infrastructure, Africa's agriculture, Africa's health system, Africa's security, and more.

In our view, our new shared vision statement lays out a forward-looking foundation for the 21st-century partnership between Africa and the United States. We want to work with you on these issues that matter most to our people's lives. And we're looking to increase our collaboration in every area, from rural communities to urban centers, to cyberspace to outer space.

In addition to our investments, we're also committed to helping African countries assess the financing you need—the financing you need—to build sustainable and inclusive economies. We're leading a global effort to pursue equitable arrangements for global creditors to provide debt relief so nations can prioritize their people, not back-breaking debt payments.

And I'm asking the Congress for the authority to lend \$21 billion to the International Monetary Fund to provide access to necessary financing for low- and middle-income countries, which is so difficult to come by now, and to—will help Africa's recovery efforts and support projects that build resilience against future crises.

As we engage with your countries, the United States will always lead with our values. Support for democracy, respect for the rule of law, commitment to human rights, responsible government—all are part of our DNA.

That doesn't mean we always get everything right. We surely don't. And the work of democracy is never finished or never guaranteed. It's about consistent and constant self-improvement. But that's why democracy is the best tool we have to address the wide range of challenges we all face, and that belief is shared by Africans and Americans alike.

From South Africa's world-changing triumph over apartheid to Nigeria's "Not Too Young To Run" movement empowering a new generation of change makers, to the record voter turnout in Zambia, where young people demanded a better future, we see over and over again that our greatest power is our people.

So one of the new commitments I want to highlight today is the investment in countering democratic backsliding through our new African Democratic and Political Transition initiative. Collaborating closely with African governments, regional institutions, and civil society, my administration will work with the United States Congress to invest \$75 million to strengthen transparent, accountable governance, facilities—facilitate voter registration, support constitutional reform, and more.

We'll also work to support and strengthen the security benefits that flow from good governance, including with a new 21st-Century Partnership for African Security. Through this 3-year, \$100 billion—\$100 million pilot program, the Department of Defense will work with our African partners to boost reforms that build their security capacity.

Now, as every leader here understands, the real measure of success is not in announcements, but it's in the follow-through. That's why I've asked one of our great diplomats—a man with deep respect for Africa and long experience working with the governments across the continent—to oversee implementation coming out of this summit: Ambassador Johnnie Carson.

Many of you already know him personally. You certainly know his skill and his reputation. So you know that he's going to make sure we translate our commitments on paper into progress that people can see in their daily lives.

And on Tuesday, I also directed the establishment of the President's Advisory Council on African Diaspora Engagement in the United States so we can tap the enormous strength of the diaspora communities here in the United States and make sure their insight and experiences are reflected in our work.

And finally, I'm grateful that all of you have made the journey to Washington for this summit, and I'm eager to visit your continent. As I told some of you—you invited me to your countries. I said, "Be careful what you wish for because I may show up." The poor relatives always show up. The wealthy ones never show up. The poor come, and they eat your food and stay longer than they should. Well, I'm looking forward to seeing many of you in your home countries. *[Laughter]*

I also directed—*[laughter]*—the establishment of the President's Advisory Council, as I said, on the diaspora, and we'll get input from them.

And finally, I'm grateful that all of you have made the journey, as I said. And I know it's been long. And I know when you arrive here at—in the middle of the night and then start off a couple hours later at meetings, it's a long haul.

I—Vice President Harris is also planning to visit, as is my wife Jill. Secretary Blinken's on his way. Secretary of Defense Austin. Secretary of the Treasury Yellen. Secretary of Commerce Raimondo. The USAID Administrator, Power. And our Ambassador to the United Nations, Linda Thomas-Greenfield.

Promise you'll send them back. Promise you'll send them back. I need them. They all want to go, but I'm worried they won't come home. The—but I'm all—all kidding aside, we're all going to be seeing you, and you're going to see a lot of us, because we're deadly earnest and serious about this endeavor. And you're going to see us deliver our commitments—all of our commitments.

Now, we've crafted this summit and this agenda in close cooperation with the African Union and focused on African priorities. The United States fully supports the blueprint you laid out in Agenda 2063 to build an integrated—quote, "integrated, prosperous, and peaceful Africa" that is driven by the African people, centered in inclusive and sustainable development, and where Africa is an indispensable global partner.

I'm eager to hear from all of you how can the United States deepen our partnerships with you and better work with African nations and the AU to fulfill the aspirations of Agenda 2063. And I want to thank you all again.

And I'm now going to turn it over to Secretary of State Blinken to facilitate our discussion. Again, thank you so much for being here. Appreciate it.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:42 a.m. at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to President Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo of the Democratic Republic of the Congo; and former U.S. Ambassador to Kenya Johnnie Carson.

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Names: Austin, Lloyd J., III; Biden, Jill T.; Blinken, Antony J.; Carson, Johnnie; Power, Samantha; Raimondo, Gina M.; Thomas-Greenfield, Linda; Tshisekedi Tshilombo, Félix-Antoine; Yellen, Janet L.

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Advisory Council on; African Union; Civil and human rights, U.S. promotion efforts; Congo, Democratic Republic of the, President; COVID–19 pandemic; Group of Twenty (G–20) nations; Health care services and infrastructure in developing countries, international assistance; Infrastructure development, international assistance for developing countries; International Development, U.S. Agency for; International Monetary Fund; Russia, conflict in Ukraine; Secretary of Commerce; Secretary of Defense; Secretary of State; Secretary of the Treasury; Special Presidential Representative for U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit Implementation; U.N. Security Council; U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations; U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit; Ukraine, Russian invasion and airstrikes.

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